

REVIEW

The Cycads, by Loran M. Whitelock. 2002. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. Hardcover [ISBN 0-88192-522-5]. 374 pp. \$39.95.

It seems likely that anyone with an interest in the ferns and the so called fern allies would also harbor an interest or potential interest in the cycads. There is something about these plants that tug at those same intellectual strings. Perhaps it is their antiquity or their fern-like foliage, or simply it is their underdog status—after all everyone knows that the ferns and cycads have already had their time in the sun and that they are just waiting for the door to close behind them. Whatever the reason, *The Cycads*, is a book that you will enjoy. This large format, coffee table sized book is impressive, from its magnificent cover photo to 505 color plates and numerous line drawings.

Obviously designed for the cycad gardener or horticulturalist, *The Cycads* also has a home in the library of any pteridologist or morphologist. The book begins with several light chapters on cycad distribution and classification. These chapters are easy to read and while not precisely exhaustive nor entirely reflective of some of our newest concepts, they are informative at an avocational level. Chapter 3 provides a simple, brief overview of the plant body and reproductive structures and closes with a section on hybridization within the group. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss cultivation and propagation and chapter six discusses conservation. Chapter 8 is a brief overview of cycad ethnobotany and is supplemented nicely with a number of very nice color plates.

The majority of the book is dedicated to generic and specific treatments. Each species account gives an in depth description of the organism as well as statements of native habitat and distribution. The strength of these accounts certainly lies in the paragraphs that follow as they supplement earlier discussions on cultivation, morphological variation, conservation status, and a number of varied aspects of the individual species. These treatments are filled with information that has come about through years of experience and study of this amazing assemblage of plants. *The Cycads* culminates with a number of helpful appendices dealing with various cultivation aspects of the cycads.

There are few failings with this book and those that I did find are likely best interpreted to my own idiosyncratic desires for a book of this type. I was disappointed not to find a key to genera and species. This book, with so much accumulated data, would certainly have benefited a wider botanical audience with some identification aid. A second aspect that left me wanting was the lack of explicit literature citation within the body of the text. A reader interested in say the pollination biology of the cycads must search a lengthy, 9+ pages of bibliography in hopes to find an appropriate reference.—R. JAMES HICKEY, Botany Department, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056.